

Provided by the Democratic Staff of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Honorable Bob Filner, Chairman

Summary of H.R. 327, as amended

Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act

This bill directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop and implement a comprehensive program to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans.

Section 1 – Short Title

- This Act may be cited as the “Joshua Omgig Veterans Suicide Prevention Act”

Section 2 – Sense of Congress

- The special needs of veterans suffering from PTSD and elderly veterans who are at high risk for depression and experience high rates of suicide should be taken into consideration during the development and implementation of this Act.

Section 3 – Comprehensive Program for Suicide Prevention Among Veterans

- VA shall develop a comprehensive program that includes the components described in Section 4.

Section 4 – Components of Program

- Staff Education - requires the VA to provide education and training for VA staff, contractors, and medical personnel who have interaction with veterans.
- Screening - directs VA to regularly screen and monitor all veterans who receive medical care in the VA health care system for risk factors for suicide and to provide for referral of veterans at risk for suicide for appropriate counseling and treatment.
- Tracking – requires VA to track veterans.
- Counseling and Treatment – directs VA to provide for referral of veterans at risk for suicide for appropriate counseling and treatment.
- Designation of Suicide Prevention Counselors - requires VA to designate a suicide prevention counselor at each VAMC.
- Best Practices Research - mandates VA to research the best practices for suicide prevention among veterans, including best practices for helping veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma.
- Research – requires VA to work with HHS, NIH, CDC, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration when conducting research. Requires VA to conduct mental health research on veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma.
- 24-Hour Mental Health Care - requires VA to provide for the availability of 24-hour mental health care for veterans.
- Hotline – provides for a toll-free hotline to be available at all times.
- Outreach and Education for Veterans and Families - provides outreach and education for veterans and their families to promote mental health.
- Peer Support Counseling Program – creates a peer support-counseling program where veterans can volunteer as peer counselors to assist other veterans with mental health and readjustment problems.

Section 5 – Report to Congress

- Requires the VA to report within 90 days of implementation on status, timeline and costs for complete implementation within 2 years, and recommendations for further legislation to improve suicide prevention programs.